

# **Social Competence and Information Utilization among Library and Information Science Undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education, Nigeria**

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***Abstract:** Information use is an integral part of our daily lives. Its effective use could be a function of intrinsic factors such as social competence. This study investigates social competence as correlate of information use among Library and Information Science (LIS) undergraduates in Tai Solarin University of Education (TASUED), Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted. Data were gathered from 108 LIS undergraduates in TASUED, using an instrument tagged Social Competence and Information Use Questionnaire (SCIUQ) with reliability values: ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ) social competence and ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ) information utilization. 103 (93%) questionnaire were returned and found usable for the study. Results showed that the undergraduates had a high level of social competence; the most utilized information sources were Radio (82.5%), Libraries (51%), Television (65%), Colleagues and Friends (62%), Churches and Mosques (57%), and Lectures/Seminars (50%). Social competence had no significant relationship with information utilization ( $r = 0.144$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ). There is no significant gender difference in the social competence of undergraduates ( $t = 0.454$ ;  $df = 101$ ;  $P > 0.05$ ); and there is significant gender difference in the information utilization of respondents ( $t = 3.012$ ;  $df = 101$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ). The study recommends the boosting of social competence skills of undergraduates through seminars and speeches and the development of an effective information use training program by the university.*

## **I. Introduction**

The importance of information as a critical ingredient for purposeful living and self-actualization has been with us for decades. The sources from which information can be derived has increased and improved over time so that everybody, regardless of age, affiliation, or status can find relevant information to use.

Undergraduates need information to be successful. Academic success of students have been traced to and associated with several variables, one of which is social competence. In the same context, efficient information use by undergraduates could be contingent upon their social competence. Students who have a good information use background develop a good level of social competence (Topping and Bremmer, 1998). Social competence is the

processing of someone's social, emotional and intellectual skills and behaviors needed to succeed as a member of a society (Welsh and Bierman, 2002). It is one's ability to regulate his or her emotions and behaviors within social contexts to reach one's social goals and attain developmental tasks (Hastings, 2006).

Social competence encompasses a range of behaviors that supports adaptive and successful functioning within interactions. Effective social and relationship skills are increasingly important predictor of success in schools (Malecki and Elliot, 2002; Wentzel 1993), and a fulfilling life in today's information based society (Rychen, 2003).

Effective information use by undergraduates in an academic environment could be a result of the student's acquisition of the requisite social, emotional, cognitive skills and behavior for successful social adaptation.

Gender differences with regards to social competence and information use of undergraduates calls for attention. Gender dimensions of these variables could be crucial to providing explanations. How has the female Library and Information Science (LIS) undergraduate fared against her male counterparts in terms of her social competence and information utilization?

It is against this background that the current study investigates the relations between social competence and information utilization of undergraduates in Tai Solarin University Education (TASUED). TASUED was established in 2005 as the 76<sup>th</sup> University and the first University of Education in Nigeria. In the 2006/2007 session, the university admitted its first class of LIS undergraduates.

## **II. Statement of the Problem**

Undergraduates in Nigeria, as in many other countries, have been known to seldom visit libraries and information centers to use relevant information. Though they have been found to be socially active, the requisite skills and behavior for successful social adaptation in terms of information search and use activities in libraries for self-actualization may either be lacking or too embryonic among TASUED LIS undergraduates. The consequence of inadequate information utilization activities among TASUED LIS undergraduates may have resulted in low social competence level and vice versa.

In Nigeria, few authors have examined and used psychological variables such as social competence to probe information use of different categories of users. This study aimed to fill this gap and provide real insight into the social competence and information utilization of LIS undergraduates in TASUED.

### **III. Research Question**

The study aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of social competence for information utilization among LIS undergraduates in TASUED?
2. What is the frequency of use of information sources by LIS undergraduates in TASUED?

### **IV. Hypotheses**

The study also tested the following hypotheses at five percent level of significance:

- Ho<sub>1</sub> There is no significant relationship between social competence and information utilization among LIS undergraduates in TASUED.
- Ho<sub>2</sub> There is no significant gender difference in the social competence of LIS undergraduates in TASUED.
- Ho<sub>3</sub> There is no significant gender difference in the information utilization of LIS undergraduates in TASUED.

### **V. Literature Review**

The term 'social competence' has been widely used in developmental psychology literature with variants of definition. The social competence variable has been used to explain and predict social skills and success in children, youth and adults across different situations and environments. Social competence is the ability to be effective in the realization of social goals (Foster and Ritchey, 1979). Attempts at defining social competence has done so solely in terms of social skills functioning, problem solving behavior, perspective taking and person perception (Caldarella and Merrell, 1997). Indeed, researchers have often defined social competence by centering social success upon effective interaction (Anderson and Messick,

1974; Gresham, 1986; Rubin and Rose-Krasnor, 1992). The set of skills and behavior of socially competence persons are manifested as the general ability to interact successfully with other people, to be generous and thoughtful, and to use accepted social techniques when attempting to influence other behaviors. A behavior which can be positively influenced, in the context of this paper, is information utilization. Information use is an important construct in information research and a key variable for functional living. Essentially, information is conceived as a resource, especially as something that can help solve problem in a development context (Meyer, 2005).

Nearly all information resources have increased dramatically over the last several years (Lyman and Varian, 2003). Increase in information resources and sources have necessitated their use for personal development in several contexts. The extent to which people are able to utilize information will determine the usefulness of information as a development resource (Meyer, 2005). In the context of this study, information use refers to undergraduates' location and exploitation of information from several sources to support their scholarly endeavors. As such, there has been increased effort to explore the question of information use via studies in the use and relevance of different information channel and sources (Eskola, 1998).

The social competence construct has been used to examine other variables in order to explain and predict human behavior. A number of behaviors and skills, such as emotional and behavioral regulation, peer relation skills, effective communication, self-assertion abilities, social problem solving and conflict resolution skills, contribute to social competence (Caldarella and Merrell, 1997). Socially competent youths are able to balance social demands with personal and familial goals (Allen and Land, 1999). Over time, socially competent children have greater self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities (Hymel, Rubin, Rowden and LeMare, 1990) and report more happiness and well-being (Parker and Asher, 1993).

Wentzel (1991) found a strong association between social competence and positive academic achievement of early adolescent students. Correlational findings in the study indicate that social competence is related significantly to students' grades.

Undergraduates' information use studies have shown that students are frequent information sources users (Hoglund and Thorsteinsdottr, 1996), although there are significant differences as to how students of different disciplines use library and information services. Other studies,

which include Foster (2004), Fidzani (1998) and Steinerova and Susol (2005), have focused on how undergraduates in specific fields seek and use information.

Toppings and Bremmer (1998) found that students who have a good information background develop a good level of social competence and have the potential to promote social responsibilities in a variety of ways. Penn, Mueser, Spaulding, Hope and Reed (1995) investigated the relationship between information processing and social competence among individual with Schizophrenia and found that information processing was significantly related to social competence, even after controlling for patient demographics, chronicity, and symptomatology.

A study on family work conflicts, information use and social competence of postgraduate students (Olorunfemi, 2009) found a strong association between information use and social competence of students. Further analysis reveals that information use and family work conflict were related to social competence.

## **VI. Research Methodology**

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design. The independent variables could not be manipulated or directly controlled. The study population consisted of 108 LIS undergraduates of TASUED Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria. At the time of the study, the students were in the latter stage of their first and second year of four year training. The population and the proximity of the students necessitated the use of total enumeration technique for the study. A questionnaire tagged Social Competence and Information Use Questionnaire (SCIUQ) was directly administered to all the students. The instrument had two sections. Section A elicited respondents' bio-data and Section B had items to gather information on the students' social competence level and information use. Section B was structured on a four-point likert-type rating scale.

The instrument went through face and content validity by a psychologist and librarians. Reliability was assured through a pilot study, involving selected students from other departments within the University. Cronbach alpha test on the scales revealed co-efficient values of ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ) for the scale of social competence and ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ) on information utilization.

All copies of the questionnaire administered were retrieved. However, five (5) of the retrieved copies were found unusable, due to omissions and mutilations. A total of 103 copies of the questionnaire were, therefore, used for the study, representing 93% response rate.

## VII. Findings

The result showed that 30 (29%) of the respondents were male while 73 (71%) were females. Those within the age range of 21-24 years were 60%. This is expected because the respondents are university undergraduates.

*1. Research question 1: What is the level of social competence for information utilization by LIS undergraduates in TASUED?*

Table 1: Rank order of social-competence of LIS undergraduates for information utilization

Rank	Items	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	I love having meaningful and satisfying relationship with others	4.69	0.63
2.	I recognize and respect others people's right	4.55	0.74
3.	Understanding and respect are social norms	4.42	0.65
4.	I am always willing to help people out of trouble	4.40	0.80
5.	I communicate clearly and directly	4.38	0.56
6.	I am a good influence on people around me	4.36	0.74
7.	I am moderately conscious of myself	4.30	1.09
8.	I enjoy being with friends	4.24	0.68
9.	I have warm feelings towards others	4.20	0.77
10.	I am not aggressive	4.19	0.93
11.	I am active and not lazy in social encounters	4.14	0.92
12.	I have aspiration to make and keep friends	4.13	0.87
13.	I like mixing well with people	4.12	0.88
14.	I relate well at social gatherings	4.11	0.61
15.	Being social is helpful in close relationships	4.09	0.76
16.	I am a fashion conscious person	3.91	0.86
17.	I accept people readily	3.86	0.95

18.	I can initiate friendly talks even with strangers	3.81	0.94
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n = 103

The results showed that LIS undergraduate in TASUED had a high social competence level on virtually all items on the rating scale. High social competence scores range from: “love having meaningful and satisfying relationship with others” ( $\bar{x} = 4.69$ ); “recognize and respect other people’s right” ( $\bar{x} = 4.55$ ); “understanding and respect are social norms” ( $\bar{x} = 4.42$ ); to “initiate friendly talks even with strangers” ( $\bar{x} = 3.81$ ); “accept people readily” ( $\bar{x} = 3.86$ ) and “ a fashion conscious person” ( $\bar{x} = 3.91$ ) among others.

**2. Research question 2:** *What is the frequency of use of information sources by LIS undergraduates in TASUED?*

Table 2: Information sources utilization by LIS undergraduates

Information source	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Rarely
Friends, colleagues, relatives	64 (62.1%)	23 (22.3%)	12 (11.7%)	1(1.0%)	3 (2.9%)
Newspapers/magazines	33 (32%)	38 (37%)	28 (27%)	-	4 (4%)
Brochures and leaflets	9 (8.7%)	30 (29%)	37 (36%)	12 (11.7%)	15 (14.6%)
Billboards	39 (38%)	27 (26.2%)	14 (13.6%)	7 (6.8%)	16 (15.5%)
Television	67 (65%)	23 (22%)	9(8.7%)	3(3%)	1(1.0%)
Radio	85 (82.5%)	9 (8.7%)	5 (4.9%)	1 (1.0%)	3 (3%)
Internet	27 (26.2%)	42 (41%)	15 (14.6%)	11 (10.7%)	8 (8%)
Libraries	53 (51.5%)	30 (30%)	15 (14.6%)	1 (1.0%)	4 (4%)
Databases	8 (8%)	22 (21.4%)	31 (30.1%)	12 (11.7%)	30 (20.1%)
Information centers	21 (20.4%)	43 (41.7%)	19 (18.4%)	9 (8.7%)	11 (10.7%)
Posters	47 (45.6%)	24 (23.3%)	18 (17.5%)	3 (3%)	11 (10.7%)
Lectures, Seminars	51 (49.5%)	20 (19.4%)	18 (17.5%)	9 (8.7%)	5 (4.9%)
Churches, Mosques	59 (57%)	33 (32%)	5 (5%)	2 (1.9%)	4 (4%)
Handbills, Bulletins	26 (25%)	42 (40.8%)	23 (22.3%)	6 (5.8%)	6 (5.8%)
Journals	12 (11.7%)	34 (33%)	26 (25%)	19 (18.4%)	12 (11.7%)
Campus social groups	16 (15.5%)	26 (25.2%)	29 (28.2%)	14 (13.6%)	18 (17.5%)
Government publications	5 (5%)	24 (23.3%)	25 (24.3%)	20 (19.4%)	29 (28.2%)
NGOs	8 (7.8%)	21 (20.4%)	23 (22.3%)	17 (16.5%)	34 (33%)

Textbooks	48 (46.6%)	30 (29%)	9 (8.7%)	5 (5%)	11 (10.7%)
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n=103

The results showed that “Radio” 85 (82.5%), “Television” 67 (65%), “Friends, colleagues and relatives” 64 (62%), “Churches and Mosque” 59 (57%), “Libraries” 53 (51.5%) and Lectures/Seminars 51 (50%) were the most frequently utilized information source by LIS undergraduates in TASUED. Others were “Textbook” 48 (46.6%), “Posters” 47 (45.6%), “Billboards” 39 (38%), and “Newspapers/magazines” 33(32%). Important sources such as “Internet” 27(26.2%), “Information centers” 21 (20.4%), “Journals” 12 (11.7%) and “Databases” 8 (8%) were less utilized on daily basis by the students, though on a weekly count, “Internet” 42 (41%), “Information centers” 43 (42%) and “Journals” 34 (33%) had appreciable levels of use by the students.

**Hypothesis 1:** *There is no relationship between social competence and information utilization of LIS undergraduates in TASUED.*

Table 3: Relationship between social competence and information utilization of LIS undergraduates

Variables	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	R	Sig.	Remark
Social competence	103	79.66	6.61	0.144	0.146	p>0.05
Information utilization	103	74.23	10.91			

Correlation significant at 0.05 levels

$r = 0.144; P > 0.05$

Decision: Not significant

The study revealed that social competence of LIS undergraduates in TASUED had no significant relationship with their information use. The study showed correlation co-efficient value  $r = 0.144; P > 0.05$ . The hypothesis is, therefore, validated.

**Hypotheses 2:** *There is no significant gender difference in the social competence of LIS undergraduates in TASUED.*

Table 4: T-test comparisons of social competence based on gender



Social competence	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t cal	Sig.	Rmk
Male	30	80.13	6.08	101	0.454	0.651	p>0.05
Female	73	79.47	6.84				

\* Significant at 0.05 level

**H<sub>02</sub>** t = 0.454; df = 101; p>0.05

Decision: Not significant

The study found that there is no significant gender difference in the social competence of LIS undergraduates. The study showed t value of 0.454 and a significant score of 0.651, t = 0.454; df = 101; p > 0.05. The hypothesis is hereby validated.

**Hypotheses 3:** *There is no significant gender difference in the information utilization level of LIS undergraduates in TASUED.*

Table 5: T-test comparisons of Information utilization based on gender

Information utilization	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	t cal	Sig	Rmk
Male	30	79.10	8.40	101	3.012	0.003	p<0.05
Female	73	72.23	11.25				

\* Significant at 0.05 level

**H<sub>03</sub>** t = 3.012; df = 101; p < 0.05

Decision: Significant

The study revealed that there is significant gender difference in the information utilization of LIS undergraduates in TASUED. The study revealed a t-value of 3.012 and a significant score of 0.003, t = 3.012; df = 101, p < 0.05. The hypothesis is therefore invalidated. Male students exhibited higher level of information utilization ( $\bar{x}$ =79.10) than female ( $\bar{x}$  = 72.23).

### VIII. Further Discussions

A sizable percentage of the respondents were within the expected age range for undergraduates in Nigeria. Female students were in the majority. This is perhaps an

indication of the growing acceptance of the LIS profession among the female gender. In recent years, the population of the female gender in the LIS profession has been on the rise.

The students perceived that social competence for information use was high on virtually all the items on the measurement scale. These students are strong of the opinion that they have the ability to be effective in realizing their social goals, one of which is their ability to be efficient information users. In the context of this study, this finding indicates that the undergraduates under study believe they possess the requisite social, emotional, intellectual skills and behavior necessary for achieving success in their information utilization efforts. The finding also gives the impression that these students could graduate from the university to become successful information professionals with high level of social competence and excellent information use skills. The result corroborates that of Wentzel (1991), and Topping and Bremner (1998).

Information utilization for the male and female students varies. It can be inferred that male undergraduates' level of information use is higher than that of the female, based on the information use mean scores derived for both genders. The male gender has fared better in information related activities according to studies by Sairosse (2003), Adetoro, Simisaye and Oyetuga (2010). Internet use is male dominated (Jagboro, 2003) and the female tend to experience difficulty in information sourcing and feel less competent and comfortable using internet applications (Ford, Miller and Moss, 2001).

## **IX. Conclusion**

The LIS undergraduates in TASUED had high perception of their social competence for information use in all the indicators on the rating scale. The most frequently used information sources were Radio, Television, Friends, Colleagues and Relatives; Church and Mosques, Libraries as well as Lectures/Seminars. Social competence of students was not significantly related with their information utilization. There is no significant difference in the level of information literacy based on gender; there is a significant difference in the level of information utilization of LIS undergraduates based on gender. Social competence perception of the undergraduates was quite high but frequency of use of some important information sources was low and consequently their social competence did not positively correlate with

information utilization. Though gender difference in terms of social competences of students was nonexistent, the males were better information users than females.

The revelations in this study may be informative for university libraries regarding the significance of efficient and effective use of information sources by students and staff in achieving academic excellence. Social competence has proven to be a veritable catalyst for the attainment of educational task and personal self-actualization. As such, universities and educational institutions should be re-awakened to this reality. Though the study does not claim exhaustively even within the university (TASUED), the outcome of the study will assist in developing relevant information use and literacy instructional initiatives that could inculcate and improve upon students information sourcing and use skills.

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